

In addition to their creative hobbies, Otello and Carolyn have always been active in the Wallingford political arena. Their outstanding work with the Democratic Town Committee has benefitted many local elected officials, including myself. Their tireless efforts have gone a long way in bringing a strong voice to local residents and their interests.

Enjoying their retirement years together, Otello and Carolyn have found what may be the key to a successful marriage—teamwork. Whether with their hobbies or in the community, it is a rare moment not to see these two working together. It is with great pride that I rise today to join family and friends in congratulating my dear friends Otello and Carolyn Massoni as they celebrate their 50th Anniversary. My very best wishes to them for many more years of health and happiness.

TRIBUTE TO STATE SENATOR REGIS GROFF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a man considered, after twenty years of service to be the "Conscience of the Colorado Senate." As a State Senator Regis Groff was a man who never backed down from a fight and always stood up for what he believed in. Although he often stood alone, he never hesitated to do what he believed was right.

As an African-American political leader from West, Regis was often pitted against the forces of discrimination, a battle in which he was consistently outnumbered. He pushed for Colorado to divest itself from business relationships with the apartheid regime of South Africa, and was a strong voice for enhancing voter registration. When it wasn't popular, he was also a voice for rational gun control. He was responsible for carrying Senate legislation in Colorado designating the birthday of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. as a state holiday.

Regis Groff's convictions earned him respect from both sides of the aisle. One former colleague remarked, "there would be a hush when Regis went to the microphone." The former Colorado Senate President, a member of the opposing party, said, "Regis was the most fun and challenging person to debate at the microphone of anyone I served with in the legislature."

I would ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to a great and dedicated public servant. I am including an article from a recent edition of the Denver Post that recognizes the significant contributions of Regis Groff to the people of Colorado.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ... REGIS GROFF?:
FORMER "CONSCIENCE OF COLORADO"
SPEAKS FROM SIDELINES

(By James B. Meadow)

The former "Conscience of the Colorado Senate," the man who spent 20 years fighting—and mostly losing—the good fight is staring out the window of the clubhouse of the Park Hill Golf Course sympathetically watching grown men flail at a little white ball.

"Most retirees assume their golf game will be much, much better, but it doesn't happen

that way," says Regis Groff. He flashes his trademark megawatt smile as he adds, "At least it didn't happen to me. But then I only play one-third as much golf as I want to."

Not that he's complaining, because these days life is better than just OK for Groff. For one, he looks a decade younger than his 66 years, almost too youthful to be the grandfather of four. For another, he takes a winter hiatus in Las Vegas every year.

He also indulges his passion for baseball by taking advantage of his Colorado Rockies season tickets. True, they're not his beloved Chicago Cubs, but few know better than Groff that life is riddled with compromise.

For two decades, he was the impassioned, eloquent spokesman for liberal causes in the Colorado Senate, a man whose flights of oratory were legendary.

"There would be a hush when Regis went to the microphone," says former Sen. Mike Feeley, calling the Democrat "the finest public speaker ever to grace the floor of the state Senate."

Even those at the opposite end of the political spectrum were Groff fans.

"Regis was the most fun and challenging person to debate at the microphone of anyone I served with in the legislature," says Tom Norton, former Senate president. "I don't know that he ever passed a whole bunch of bills. But he always made sure the point of view he represented was adequately considered."

Norton isn't exaggerating in his remarks about Groff not passing a whole bunch of bills.

"Oh, it was thorough frustration to have zero influence, no power," says Groff of his 20 years in the minority party; years of futilely fighting to ban capital punishment, have the state divest itself from business relationships with the apartheid regime of South Africa, enhance voter registration and establish gun control.

"But you have to raise issues that aren't popular," says Groff. "You try to raise issues that touch the conscience of each human being."

Although Groff dismisses Sen. Jana Mendez's claim that he was the conscience of the Senate as "overspeak," he doesn't deny that he was loath to back down from an issue.

That's why in April 1993, only months after Coloradans passed Amendment 2—largely seen as a slap at homosexual rights—Groff tried to get the Senate to put it back on the ballot to let voters "revisit" the measure.

That same session, he was blunt about his feelings for Douglas Bruce, author of Amendment 1, which limited the state's ability to raise taxes and spend money.

On the Senate floor, Groff said that Bruce, a California transplant, "slithered into Colorado and hoodwinked the state."

Standing alone was second nature to Groff: He was the Senate's only black. And political ostracism was nothing new for a guy who knew all about racial discrimination.

When he first arrived in Denver in 1963, to begin what would be a lengthy career as an educator, he and his wife were repeatedly denied rental homes in Park Hill because, as landlords told him, "We don't rent to coloreds."

Growing up the son of a potter in Monmouth, Ill., a small rural community, Groff wasn't allowed in the YMCA pool.

Racial intolerance was still an emphatic given when he was attending Western Illinois University. Along with a group of other black students, Groff led a successful push to force a local barbershop to serve black students.

His proudest moment as a legislator came in 1984, when he persuaded the Senate to pass a bill making Martin Luther King's birthday a state holiday.

He recalls that debate over the bill almost caused a fist fight with another senator. "I told him, 'I should kick your ass!'" and he said, "C'mon!" but others stepped between us," laughs Groff.

Groff left the Senate in 1994 to head the state's Youth Offender System, a multi-million-dollar rehabilitation facility for violent juveniles. He quit in 1998 and then headed the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative.

These days, he says, "I have no gainful employment," content to be a grandfather, serve on boards, travel, golf, watch baseball, adjust to life as a divorced male after 33 years of marriage and basically do what he pleases.

Would he ever again consider elective office?

"No, no, no!" he says, recoiling in mock horror. "If 20 years of politics doesn't fill you appetite, then that appetite is so insatiable as to be dangerous."

Still, he does confess to more than a trace of envy now that Democrats control the Senate.

"You bet I'm jealous. I'd like to know how it feels to be in the majority," he says.

But then you'd expect a frank answer. After all, anything less from the Senate's former conscience would be, well, unconscionable.

HONORING THE LATE GLADYS "SKEETER" WERNER WALKER

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remember the accomplished and unforgettable life of Gladys "Skeeter" Werner Walker. She was truly a kind person and an outstanding athlete. As family and friends mourn her passing, I would like to pay tribute to this longtime resident of Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Skeeter was born in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, with the rest of her family, and was the oldest of three siblings who grew up to ski in the Olympics. She and her two brothers, Buddy and Loris, trained locally on Howelsen Hill and traveled later to ski in the Alps. The Werner family's prominence in the skiing world flourished to such an extent that the name of the ski mountain in Steamboat Springs was changed from Storm Mountain to Mount Werner in their honor.

Skeeter began skiing at age one and entering competitions by the age of five. Perhaps one of her greatest achievements was being selected as the youngest member of the U.S. Alpine World Championship Team in 1954, at the age of 21. At the downhill event in Sweden, Skeeter placed 10th. Her triumph was awarded when she graced the cover of Sports Illustrated and became recognized as one of America's great Olympians. When Skeeter again returned to the Olympics in 1956 in Italy, she again garnered a 10th place finish in the downhill race.

Skiing was not Skeeter's only career. After retiring from skiing in 1958, she relocated to New York where she was a model and a fashion designer. The Yampa Valley drew Skeeter back in 1962, and along with her brother Buddy and his wife Vanda, they opened two ski shops in Steamboat and Skeeter initiated